

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on
Newfoundland and Labrador's
Intangible Cultural
Heritage Program

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ich@heritagefoundation.ca
Heritage Foundation of NL



In this issue

- Page 1 Oral History Workshops
- Page 2 Rooted in History
- Page 3 Tin Grave Markers
- Page 5 Hum on the Humber

Oral History/Folklore Workshops

This month, we will be offering two "Introduction to Folklore and Oral History Interviews" workshops, in Corner Brook, and in Grand Falls Windsor.

These workshops are open to anyone with an interest in local history, culture and folklore.

The workshops are intended to give a background on how to conduct research interviews in the field, and will give people a chance to try their hand at creating interview questions and conducting an interview. They will provide an overview of the methodology and explore the practical matters of creating, designing, and executing effective oral history research projects. Topics that the workshop will address include project planning, ethical issues, and recording equipment.

The workshop will be taught by folklorist Dale Jarvis. Dale has been working for the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador since 1996, and holds a BSc in Anthropology/Archaeology from Trent University, and a MA in Folklore from Memorial University. He is a past president of the Newfoundland Historic Trust, and has contributed as a board member and volunteer to many local arts and heritage organizations, and is a tireless promoter of the oral tradition.

Date: Friday, March 16th, 1pm - 5pm

Workshop fee: \$40 (preregistration required)

Location: Glynmill Inn, Corner Brook

Date: Saturday, March 24th, 1pm - 5pm

Workshop fee: \$40 (preregistration required)

Location: Mount Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls Windsor

To register call Nicole at 1-888-739-1892 ext 3, or email: ichprograms@gmail.com

Rooted in History: The Tradition of Acadian and Mi'kmaw Basketry

Saturday, March 17, 2012, 7pm

Arts and Science building, Room 379, Grenfell College, Corner Brook

In Newfoundland and Labrador traditionally-made baskets come in many shapes, sizes and styles and can be crafted from a variety of materials. To celebrate that history, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (HFNL) is organising a public talk around the tradition of basket making.

On Saturday, March 17th, at Grenfell College in Corner Brook, HFNL will be hosting a special talk and presentation on Mi'kmaw and Acadian spruce root and ash baskets, with visiting Mi'kmaw elders Margaret Pelletier and Della Maguire, traditional ash basket makers from Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland basket makers Eileen Murphy and Helga Gillard. The talk will take place from 7-9pm in the Arts and Science building, Room 379, Grenfell College.



Margaret Pelletier was born on the Waycobah First Nation in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Basket weaving has always been a part of her life for as long as she can remember. As a child, Pelletier helped make baskets as a source of income to help support her family. Pelletier joined the Maine Basket Maker's Alliance as a board member, which caused her to begin thinking about basket making as a fine art. Throughout the next 20 years, basket and quill-work became a hobby for Pelletier, who enjoys creating one of a kind works of art. Her baskets are woven with black ash splints, decorated with curlique designs, and are finished with braided sweet grass. As each basket is delicately woven, each piece takes its place as part of a unique creation made up of intricate designs and artistic forms.

Della Maguire is of First Nation's Mi'kmaw ancestry and grew up in a home of constant basket making. Her parents Abe and Rita Smith were known as the finest Mi'kmaw basket-making team in Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, she was not part of that process, as watching her parents making baskets seemed to her 'just a part of life' and never once did she realize that their basket making was a cultural form of art. Upon retiring in 2006, Maguire took part in a basket-making workshop and soon realized this was something she needed to pursue. She has taken the art of basket making very seriously and spends her time trying to improve with each basket. Maguire is passing down her skills to her grand-daughters, as she believes it is her duty to continue learning and honing her skills and to share this valuable cultural art. In 2011 she received a grant from Canada Council of the Arts to enhance her skills and currently teaches the craft through workshops of her own.

Eileen Murphy was first introduced to basket making when she attended a class instructed by Mr. Anthony White in 1980. At the time he had been asked to instruct a few students from the new Visual Arts Program, at what was then called the Bay St. George Community College in Stephenville, on the techniques he used in spruce root basket making. Murphy enjoys a career as an art educator, teaching for both the local school district and at the Grenfell campus of Memorial University. Her interests surround the fine arts and she enjoys painting and drawing. Textile art is a particular favorite, and Murphy has been weaving baskets from roots, twigs, branches, grasses, and vines for the past 32 years.

Helga Gillard grew up and was educated in Englee, White Bay and was the fifth of six children. She went on to attend Memorial University and received a Bachelor of Arts/Ed. Gillard is now retired and living in Main Brook with her husband. Gillard's interest in baskets was intrigued by locally made birch plaited baskets that were in her home growing up. She is a self taught basket maker, supplemented by basketry workshops held in various Atlantic provinces and interactions with other skilled basket makers. Gillard has been making baskets since 1988 and joined the Nova Scotia Basketry Guild in 1999. While Gillard has woven many styles of baskets, her primary focus is on rib and split baskets. She also has a keen interest in utilizing materials from her natural environment, such as spruce root and red osier dogwood.

Photo: Baskets made by Mr Melvin White.

Two Tin Monuments from a Cemetery on the South Shore of Bonavista Bay

By Patrick Carroll, Parks Canada

Down the road there is an old church with wispy birch in the yard, bright pink and purple lupins in season, and rough ground where the headstones stand brave before time, some swaying and others toppled. One day, among the long grass and creeping ground cover I found two tin grave monuments that had fallen. I had never noted tin as being common in cemeteries except for the occasional grave trimming with its rhythmical convex edging. I contacted a few people familiar with the island's funereal artifacts and traditions, but, they were not familiar with tin being used to produce monuments either; not that it is unique, but, to date it seems uncommon.

Jump ahead a couple of years and I find one of the two monuments is in my neighbour's possession, but, that's not the focus of this piece - I simply want to document what I know and find out if anyone else has ever come across anything like them because, except for a cemetery associated with a turn-of-the-twentieth century gold mining community in Menzies, Australia, I haven't been able to find any reference to anything like these two tin grave markers.



I have one of the two monuments currently in my possession. The text is hand painted in white and it reads: "In Memory of / Mary Puddister / Age 86 Years / 1910 / [unclear] He Come." It is made of tin, folded and soldered on the edges. The base is bent outward and it appears to have been nailed to a piece of wood. This monument has a circular top with two concave notches in opposite sides where the crown meets the edges. A tin cross is attached with solder to the top of the face of the marker, centred above the text. It is a wonderfully plain and evocative artefact; the letters dissipating like smoke on the wind.

The second marker is very much the same with the text: "In Memory of / Joseph E [Bartlett?] / Age [9?] Years / Died Feb 19 1907 / Thy will be done." This marker is also very plain. It has a small shoulder on each side where the crown meets the edges. It has a scar on it where it appears that a soldered cross was once located, centred above the text like on the other one. Both markers are the same size: 35 x 15 ½ x 2 inches (89 x 39 x 5 cm).

Some preliminary on-line research showed that there is a history for the use of metal in the production of grave markers. Zinc was used in the commercial manufacturing of metal monuments.

Sue Burns Moore (<http://claibornecountymns.org/herlong.htm>) states that "the monuments, called 'white bronze' for commercial appeal, are actually made of moulded, pure zinc panels, bolted together. Over the years these 'tombstones' weather in the elements, gradually forming a tough shell of zinc carbonate. This aged patina is what gives the markers their lovely blue-gray colour."

Mark Culver (<http://www.uni.edu/connors/metalmon.htm>) states that the use of white





must have its unique story based on the availability of raw materials from English or American producers and on the history of settlement that would have dictated a shift from the purchasing of imported finished products to the creation of products by resident tinsmiths. It was only once manufacturers were able to produce tinfoil in America in the early nineteenth century that the production of tinware, and the prevalence of tinsmiths, increased in the United States. Further research is required into the history of tinsmithing in Newfoundland, but, I expect that there were no facilities on the island for the manufacture of tinfoil and that raw materials were acquired from manufacturers in England and the United States.

It would be interesting to know how common items made of tin were in outport communities, particularly those communities that had limited or no access to tinsmiths. The monuments that are the subject of this article were found in a community that is not far from Bonavista. The Lawrence family were tinsmiths in Bonavista starting in the early twentieth century. Their workshop has the date 1903 above the door in a 1975 photograph taken by Dr. Shane O'Dea. Bonavista residents remember watching the Lawrence brothers working in their shop into the 1970s. No direct connection can be made between the Lawrences and the tin monuments that are the subject of this piece.

Commercial manufacturing of metal monuments and tinsmithing aside, I think the existence of these two, unique monuments says something much more intimate and personal about the individuals and families they represent. In part, they may represent what is referred to as the "make do" philosophy that is said to have inspired the tin detailing on the stones at the Menzie's cemetery in Australia and is often evident in the material culture associated with outport Newfoundland.

But, given that there are plain wooden markers in the cemetery as well as an abundance of marble monuments, it is most likely that the choice to place these tin markers is much more involved in the families that placed them than it is any indication of a national character.

For some reason, it was decided that a tinsmith would produce these rather plain, but evocative, monuments to mark the burial sites of these two related, or unrelated individuals.



bronze for grave markers was perfected in 1873. Wilson, Parson and Company of Bridgeport Connecticut became the primary manufacturer in the United States from 1874 – 1914, at which point the focus of their manufacturing was directed to munitions. Demand for the metal monuments never returned and the company was dissolved in 1939.

Moore adds that the commercial appeal for the metal monuments was that they were "easily accessible and affordable, even being sold in the Sears & Roebuck catalogue." Therefore, although there is a precedent for the use of metal in manufacturing monuments, tin was not known to have been used for commercial purposes.

The history of tinsmithing on the island of Newfoundland

If you have information on tin grave markers in Newfoundland and Labrador, or elsewhere, send us a note at ich@heritagefoundation.ca or call 1-888-739-1892 ext 2.

Photos courtesy Pat Carroll

“Hum on the Humber”: Industrialization, Shifting Local Soundscapes, and Expressive Culture in Western Newfoundland

by Janice Esther Tulk, Cape Breton University

In the early 1920s, Sir Richard Squires promised to turn Corner Brook's economy around by establishing a paper mill in that community. While his campaign slogan, “put the Hum on the Humber,” referenced the bustling activity of industrial development that would invigorate the economy, it also foreshadowed a host of changes to the sonic environment of the west coast of Newfoundland.

One important addition was the introduction of the mill whistle, which marks the passage of time, regulates the movement of bodies, and signals trouble at the mill, while also playing a role in memorialisation (sounding on Remembrance Day), celebration (marking the end of World War II), and the everyday life of the general population. The mill and mill whistle have been (and are) deployed as symbols of economic prosperity and, more recently, economic decline in musical and literary works, as well as local discourses in community newspapers and on community radio.



The “Hum on the Humber” project, funded by the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Memorial University, focuses on the mill whistle as a “soundmark” (sonic landmark) and its related expressive culture. While the mill whistle once sounded eight times each day (1950s/1960s), its frequency has been reduced to only twice per day at present – a sonic auguring of the decline of the paper industry both locally and globally. With a strong Canadian dollar, increased production costs, and an overall reduced reliance on newsprint, paper mills throughout the province (and the world) face temporary and permanent shutdowns in operations, while workers with knowledge of the whistle and its meanings are increasingly relocating to pursue alternative employment.

This project questions how the closure of the mill and the silencing of the whistle would impact local expressive cultures and economies. If the whistle disappears from the soundscape of Corner Brook, as has already occurred in the town of Grand Falls-Windsor, will the expressive culture it inspired and the local knowledge associated with it be lost for all time? Will this trope as it appears in literature, songs, and stories still resonate with the people of Corner Brook and the west coast? Is there a way to preserve the whistle and its related folklore so that they have a life beyond that of the mill itself?

Current and former residents of Corner Brook are invited to share their perspectives on the mill whistle by completing a survey and/or participating in an interview. The survey can be accessed by visiting <http://millwhistle.blogspot.com>. For more information on the project, to indicate your interest in participating in an interview, or to obtain a paper copy of the survey, send an email to Janice Esther Tulk at millwhistle@hotmail.com or call 902.563.1118.

The results of this research will be made available to the public via an interactive multi-media exhibit at the Corner Brook Museum & Archives.

Photo by Janice Esther Tulk, 2008.



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 Editor: Dale Jarvis, ICH Development Officer, Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
 PO Box 5171, St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5V5 ich@heritagefoundation.ca